

This special threat advisory is intended to provide situational awareness of threats to public order, public safety, and the security of public officials arising from violent online rhetoric opposing new and ongoing public health restrictions (Information current as of 10 February 2022, 1400hrs). The IMCIT continues to maintain visibility on emerging threats and will provide updates as required.

SPECIAL THREAT ADVISORY – UPDATE 6

FREEDOM CONVOY 2022: NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

KEY POINTS

- The Freedom Convoy continues to force the closure of downtown Ottawa streets. Recent narratives perceiving that mass arrests are imminent have increased tensions observed online. No formal organized plot of violence has been identified.
- Solidarity actions across Canada have occurred in every province and at least one territory in the past week. These actions are expected to continue, with potential international implications arising from convoys at border crossings in British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Ontario.
- The convoy specific to Ottawa continues to receive a visible degree of international support, including from prominent American politicians and media personalities, which is promoting an image of a globally unified movement centred on opposing public health mandates.
- Nationally, narratives advising convoy supporters to “hold the line” and adopt protest actions that are likely to significantly disrupt critical transportation and economic infrastructure are indicative of an increase in temperature of rhetoric and protest tactics.
- The convoy protests throughout Canada are assessed to be a continuation of the escalation of tensions in opposition to public health orders which have been observed since April 2020 when anti-lockdown protests first began. Since the General Election last Fall in particular, there has been a notable increase in hostility displayed within online rhetoric and at some protests.

FREEDOM CONVOY 2022 – THE LATEST PROTEST ESCALATION

The Freedom Convoy 2022 and ancillary events which have spread nationwide are representing a continuation of the escalation of tensions in opposition to public health orders first observed as anti-lockdown protests in April 2020. The implementation of proof-of-vaccine systems and mandates in

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Canada

various employment sectors and provinces in Canada has resulted in growing opposition to federal and provincial government responses since that time.¹

Since the first anti-lockdown protests, the following progression in Canada has occurred:

- During the election period, from August 2021 onwards, there was a significant increase in hostility displayed at some protests and in online rhetoric, particularly towards the target^a of the protest.²
- During the month of September 2021, there was a noted increase in protests related to narratives opposing vaccine mandates and passports aimed at Liberal election campaign events, hospitals, schools and businesses.³
- Throughout Fall and early Winter 2021, the disruption of multiple children's vaccine clinics, as well as an uptick in protests outside the homes of public officials⁴, coupled with disruptions of Remembrance Day ceremonies marked another escalation within this movement⁵, as protesters no longer appeared to care about the optics of protesting at such locations.
- The prolonging of existing restrictions in January 2022 led to increasingly violent rhetoric appearing online within anti-public health order narratives⁶ and protests occurred outside provincial legislative buildings and the homes of health officials and medical officers.

The IMCIT assesses that the Freedom Convoy 2022 movement represents the latest escalation of protests in opposition to public health orders. Protesters within Canada perceive an incredible amount of support based on an enormous amount of social media-driven discussions within anti-public health order networks, as well as discussions in international networks opposing public health restrictions.

This Special Threat Advisory report identifies the potential implications of these events local to Ottawa, as well as nationally and globally.

NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION

SCOPE AND SCALE

Trucks and personal vehicles continue to disrupt daily life in Ottawa as part of the ongoing Freedom Convoy 2022 protest.⁷ Though an injunction was granted on February 7 to stop the honking of horns,⁸ it does not appear to have had an impact on the physical presence of vehicles and protesters disrupting the area. On February 9, Ottawa Police issued a warning to convoy demonstrators that arrests and charges may be laid against those engaged in unlawful activities, including mischief for blocking streets.⁹

Open source observations indicate that protesters have no intention of leaving until they meet with representatives from the government and/or public health restrictions are lifted.¹⁰ In response to information circulating that mass arrests are planned, some individuals who appear as organizers held a press conference on February 7, calling for people to come to Ottawa.¹¹ While these individuals have

^a During the election period, the target of hostility was primarily the Prime Minister.

acted as spokespeople multiple times during the convoy events, due to the variety of individuals with varying ideological grievances that have attended the ongoing public order event, it is unlikely there is central leadership controlling the behaviour or impromptu events that have occurred in Ottawa. Convoy supporters formerly employed in law enforcement and the military have appeared alongside organizers and may be providing them with logistical and security advice¹², which may pose operational challenges for law enforcement should policing techniques and tactics be revealed to convoy participants. These individuals will also have had leadership training which may serve them in leadership roles in the future.

Regardless of real or perceived leadership, the overall sentiment of those supportive of the protest is to "hold the line" in response to the recent uptick in police enforcement. Narratives suggesting that there is no police solution, and only a political solution from the Government of Canada would resolve the grievances espoused by convoy participants, have been circulating popular social media associated with the convoy. Ideologically motivated individuals present in Ottawa are seizing on narratives related to the perception of impeding police enforcement of mass arrests¹³ and contributing to rhetoric that is increasingly anti-authority in nature.

There are a variety of narratives related specifically to protest activities in the National Capital Region (NCR). Some narratives indicate that the protest is extremist in its entirety, based on the presence of known ideologically motivated individuals in attendance and the hateful or controversial symbols that have been observed through mainstream and social media reporting (e.g., photos of swastika flags). Conversely, there are also narratives circulating social media that show the protest is perceived as being peaceful, diverse and a showing unity among Canadians and indicating there are beliefs that the protest demonstrates the majority of Canadians are opposed to restrictions and mandates.

The IMCIT assesses that this protest has attracted both in-person and online support of individuals with a variety of grievances, some ideological in nature, and others who may have experienced personal hardships due to COVID-19 or are experiencing pandemic fatigue. Overall, there is anti-government sentiment based on the fact that the protesters want public health restrictions lifted and the government has the power to do so. However, not all individuals who may hold anti-government views on the specific topic of public health restrictions are believed to support extreme activities and there are diverse views regarding the use of violence during the convoy.

Money to support protesters continues to be raised by various GiveSendGo fundraisers¹⁴ ¹⁵ and Bitcoin,¹⁶ as well as through email money transfers to direct email addresses. In addition to these crowdfunding options, open source information suggests that donations of cash are accepted at Parliament Hill and some organizers intend to auction convoy-branded clothing to raise funds.¹⁷ Financing the ongoing convoy does not appear to be an issue based on the continued publicity of the protest, multiple fundraising methods, and visible donations of supplies from individuals supportive of the convoy. It is unlikely that money is being provided to all individuals attending events in Ottawa, which indicates monetary contributions are not solely motivating the ongoing events.

GENERAL THREATS

No formal organized plot of violence has been identified, however, dynamic factors continue to cause concern and may be exacerbated with police enforcement.^b The potential for violence by a lone actor or fringe group cannot be discounted as protesters remain in Ottawa. As of this writing, Ottawa Police have arrested nine individuals in relation to convoy activities including mischief, driving while impaired, and carrying a weapon to a public meeting.¹⁸

Protesters have recently shown unity in defiance of law enforcement after narratives that the police were stealing fuel from truckers circulated through popular convoy social media pages. In response to news advising that anyone bringing material supports (e.g., gas) to demonstrators could be subject to arrest,¹⁹ protesters filled jerry cans with water²⁰ and also circulated information encouraging people to walk around with empty jerry cans in an effort to mislead police.²¹ In addition to this, media reporting indicated aggressive behaviour observed towards officers in relation to the police enforcement regarding refueling.²² Recent information suggesting a presence of approximately 100 children living in trucks associated to the convoy further complicates future police operations seeking to bring an end to the convoy.²³

Counter protests have also been identified to occur within Ottawa this week on February 12²⁴ and daily rallies are planned to be held outside the Ottawa Police building on Elgin Street.²⁵ The presence of counter protesters near convoy demonstrations may escalate tension and pose additional concerns for public and officer safety.

In addition to the former law enforcement and military participants possibly providing logistical and security advice, the potential exists for serious insider threats. Those who have not lost their jobs, but are sympathetic to the movement and their former colleagues, may be in a position to share law enforcement or military information to the convoy protesters.

NATIONWIDE SOLIDARITY ACTIONS

SCOPE AND SCALE

Canada-wide solidarity actions have occurred simultaneously with the demonstration in Ottawa and continue to be planned. Regional solidarity convoys appear to be inspired by the Ottawa convoy and related enforcement actions. Protesters bringing tents, heaters, and portable toilets have been observed in some regions and may indicate intentions to hold occupation-style solidarity actions.²⁶ Other forms of solidarity actions observed include school “walkouts”, maskless “swarmings” of indoor public spaces, and impromptu rallies.

From open source information, organization of solidarity actions appear to be decentralized, in some cases organized impromptu, and not directly linked to organizers in the Ottawa convoy. Local

^b Dynamic factors include: the number of people in the crowd, the ongoing circulation of misinformation, exhaustion, substance abuse, potential for altercations amongst counter-protesters and with law enforcement, and the influence of ideologically motivated actors or charismatic speakers.

fundraisers have been initiated for some solidarity convoys and do not appear to be connected to any national fundraising efforts.

Recent announcements from the provincial governments in Alberta²⁷, Manitoba²⁸, Saskatchewan²⁹, Quebec³⁰, New Brunswick³¹, and Prince Edward Island³² to ease some public health restrictions in the near future appear to be energizing convoy supporters who perceive that these announcements are in response to the convoys and insist that all restrictions will be lifted if they “hold the line”.

Nationally, some solidarity demonstrations have been met with local counter-protests, which may escalate tension and create issues for public and officer safety. Incidents of violence and arrests arising from convoy demonstrations and counter-protests have been reported in several provinces and jurisdictions.

The following summary based on open sources and input from several RCMP Divisional Criminal Analysis Units (DCAS) provides an overview of incidents which have recently occurred and future demonstration events reported at this time.

BRITISH COLUMBIA – “E” DIVISION

- There have been at least four solidarity convoys in the past week in Vancouver³³, Victoria³⁴, Okanagan³⁵, and Surrey.³⁶
- Counter protests were held in Vancouver³⁷ and Victoria³⁸ alongside convoy demonstrations. One convoy truck driver is alleged to have rolled into a counter-protester during the Vancouver rally. Police are investigating.³⁹
- Five individuals were arrested by Vancouver Police during the solidarity action on February 5.⁴⁰
- Two bomb threats were made to Vancouver hospitals this week⁴¹, and while a link to the convoy has not yet been established, the IMCIT assesses these threats are in line with an overall uptick in threats made against healthcare workers in anti-public health order narratives.
- Convoys with potential international implications have occurred in Surrey near the Pacific Highway border crossing and are expected to continue.⁴²
- E Division DCAS assesses that there has been a steady increase in solidarity actions planned for this weekend and next. While no known criminality is predicted, the emergence of lone actors or fringe groups may seek to further individual causes. There has been an increase in online rhetoric, but there is also a narrative online to keep protests in BC peaceful, lawful and safe.
- Upcoming protests are anticipated in Vancouver⁴³, Langley⁴⁴, Cranbrook⁴⁵, the Okanagan and Vancouver Island.⁴⁶

YUKON TERRITORY – “M” DIVISION

- At least one solidarity action occurred in the past week in Whitehorse.
- A counter protest also took place during the convoy demonstration.⁴⁷
- M Division DCAS assesses that there is a low threat of disruption or criminality from the slow-roll convoys taking place in Whitehorse.

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ALBERTA – “K” DIVISION

- There have been at least seven solidarity convoys in the past week, in Calgary, Edmonton, Coutts, Lethbridge, Airdrie, Cochrane, and Okotoks.⁴⁸
- One convoy participant was charged with assault following an altercation with another driver attempting to block a convoy in central Alberta on February 3.⁴⁹
- Calgary Police issued 80 tickets in relation to the convoy over the weekend.⁵⁰
- Investigations into unlawful behaviour at the Coutts blockade are underway.⁵¹ One prominent influencer was arrested and charged with mischief and interrupting the operation of essential infrastructure after rallying protesters at Coutts to maintain the border blockade.⁵²
- Upcoming protests are anticipated at the Alberta legislative building in Edmonton.⁵³
- Convoys with potential international implications are expected to continue at the Coutts port of entry.⁵⁴

SASKATCHEWAN – “F” DIVISION

- Multiple solidarity convoys took place in various communities over the past week (Regina⁵⁵, Saskatoon, and Swift Current).
- Regina Police issued 32 tickets in relation to the convoy over the weekend.⁵⁶
- F Division DCAS reports that flash parades, rallies, and peaceful protests against the vaccine mandates and masks were held in a number of communities in the past week, in Moosomin, Unity, and Yorkton. The demonstration in Unity involved approximately 30 mask-less people who swarmed a convenience store and restaurant, disrupting both businesses.
- A protest has been organized for the Port of Regway U.S. border crossing this weekend. Groups are expected to travel from Regina to the border. Information has also been located suggesting a protest will be held at the North Portal U.S. Border Crossing commencing February 18.
- Information was received encouraging a province-wide school protest February 10.
- Upcoming protests are anticipated in Saskatoon.⁵⁷
- F Division DCAS assesses that, although the number of protests appear to be escalating in Saskatchewan, with the recent announcement regarding the lifting of restrictions, support could wane in the coming days, with only hard-core protestors attending these events.

MANITOBA – “D” DIVISION

- There have been at least two solidarity convoys in the past week, in Winnipeg⁵⁸ and Emerson.⁵⁹
- Once individual was arrested for allegedly driving into and injuring four convoy demonstrators outside the Manitoba legislative building on February 4. Police have not yet released a motive.⁶⁰
- Upcoming protests are anticipated at the Manitoba legislative building in Winnipeg⁶¹ alongside a counter-protest.⁶²
- Convoys with potential international implications have occurred at the Emerson port of entry⁶³ and are expected to continue.

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ONTARIO – “O” DIVISION

- Several solidarity convoys were held throughout the province in the past week, within the Greater Toronto Area⁶⁴, South-Western Ontario⁶⁵, and Northern Ontario⁶⁶.
- Counter protests were held in Toronto⁶⁷ and Waterloo⁶⁸ alongside convoy demonstrations.
- Two individuals were arrested for assault in Toronto during the convoy.⁶⁹ Two drivers were charged with driving infractions during the convoy in Waterloo.⁷⁰ One driver was arrested for dangerous driving at the Ambassador Bridge during the blockade.⁷¹
- Upcoming protests are expected in multiple cities across Ontario, with potential international implications at border crossings in Windsor⁷², Sarnia⁷³, and Niagara.⁷⁴

QUEBEC – “C” DIVISION

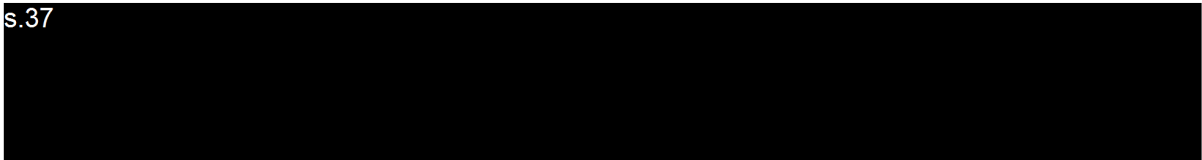
- There has been at least one solidarity convoy in the past week, in Quebec City⁷⁵.
- A counter protest took place alongside convoy demonstrations in Quebec City.⁷⁶
- Three individuals were arrested during the convoy in Quebec City. Police also issued 50 tickets for disorderly conduct and 72 tickets for road infractions.⁷⁷
- Quebec politicians have received multiple threats of violence from convoy participants.⁷⁸
- Upcoming protests are anticipated in Quebec City⁷⁹ and Montreal⁸⁰.

NEW BRUNSWICK – “J” DIVISION

- There have been at least two solidarity convoys in the past week, in Fredericton⁸¹ and Moncton⁸².
- J Division DCAS reports that several meeting points throughout New Brunswick have been identified with the common goal of going to downtown Fredericton between 11-12 February and to stay for four days. No overt threats to public or officer safety have been reported. Organizers and supporters have not openly endorsed or promoted violence.
- J Division DCAS assesses that the number of participants remains fluid but is expected to grow noticeably from past events. The intent remains to have a peaceful protest but to “gridlock” streets around the Legislature Building in Fredericton or the Trans Canada Highway should protesters be prevented from accessing the city.
- Protesters have expressed they will continue until all mandates are removed.

NOVA SCOTIA – “H” DIVISION

- There have been at least two solidarity convoys in the past week, in Halifax and Yarmouth .
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- H Division DCAS reports that upcoming protests are anticipated at the Nova Scotia/New Brunswick (NS/NB) border as well as in Halifax, Kentville, Digby, Amherst, Bridgewater, Shelburne, Berwick, Enfield, and North Sydney.
- There have been increasing calls for marine vessels to join convoys in Nova Scotia and to gather at ports (not named) on land to demonstrate. There has also been a discussion located calling for a “store storming” in the South Shore (no specifics) of the province.
- A number of threats have been noted for the NS/NB border demonstration set for February 12. These include a call to bring ‘arms’ to respond to police if necessary. There has been more than one call to shut the Trans-Canada Highway down; others discuss bringing supplies for a protracted stay and to block feeder roads onto the highway.
- H Division DCAS assesses that, based on new emerging threats and the increase in suspicious packages, combined with luke-warm engagement by organizers and those making threats to police, the NS/NB border event may require more direct police intervention than has been required to date.

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND – “L” DIVISION

- There has been at least one small-scale solidarity convoy in the past week, in Borden-Carleton.
- L Division DCAS reports that upcoming protest activity is anticipated from across the province, with small convoys of vehicles (e.g., personal, commercial, and agricultural) meeting to form a larger convoy into Charlottetown, terminating at the Provincial Legislature.
- Information received through the L Division Liaison Team advises that a small group may blockade the mandatory COVID screening facility in Borden Carleton (the provincial point of entry) after the convoy disperses from Charlottetown.

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR – “B” DIVISION

- There has been at least one solidarity convoy in the past week, in St John’s⁸³.
- A small group of six to eight people started protesting at the Glovertown Detachment several days ago but have since moved to a local Irving Gas Station and its adjacent lot. The group is expected to protest in the area again today. The organizer is trying to raise funds to travel to St. John’s or Ottawa.
- Another protest is planned for February 12 in North Sydney at the NS Marine Atlantic Ferry Terminal (opposite destination for Port-aux-Basques, NL ferry crossing).
- There are a number of planned Freedom Convoy Rallies (similar to last weekend’s planned events in Newfoundland) which will be held in St. John’s, Corner Brook, Grand Falls-Winsor and Stephenville.
- B Division DCAS assesses that each of the events is receiving significant attention online and is being widely spread throughout various personal and group social media platforms, including local classifieds. It has been noted that organizers are again encouraging the use of a chat group through Telegram.

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- B Division DCAS also received reports that suggest there have been talks of a protest/convoy to be held in the Labrador Goose Bay/South Coast area, as well as posters located online which indicates a protest will be held in Fermont, QC on February 12 between 1700-2300hrs, with Labradorians invited to join.

Based on an examination of open source reporting, and in consultation with the Divisional Criminal Analysis Sections, it appears with the convoy receiving a nationally captivated audience, there has been a significant increase in the number, duration and incidents involving criminality associated with public order events related to anti-public health measures. The targeting of critical transportation and economic infrastructure in the form of border blockades also marks another unprecedented escalation for the movement since the beginning of the pandemic.

These national solidarity actions appear to focus on the use of vehicles to conduct “slow-roll convoys” to disrupt local traffic and generate noise. The IMCIT has also observed supporters intending to join solidarity convoys using farming equipment⁸⁴, on horseback⁸⁵, and with marine vessels⁸⁶, which may pose another evolutionary, operational challenge for law enforcement.

GLOBAL SOLIDARITY ACTIONS

SCOPE AND SCALE

Protests have caused disruptions at several Ports of Entry (POE) along the Canada-U.S. border, including causing closures and delays at the Coutts POE in Alberta,⁸⁷ the Blue Water Bridge in Sarnia,⁸⁸ the Ambassador Bridge linking Detroit and Windsor⁸⁹, and the Emerson POE in Manitoba.⁹⁰ Convoys have also been reported gathering in Osoyoos⁹¹ and South Surrey,⁹² British Columbia, with the potential to disrupt the Pacific Highway POE.

Based on chatter online celebrating the perceived effectiveness of the convoys,⁹³ and international camaraderie between anti-public health networks in the U.S. and Canada, it is possible that sporadic disruptions at Canadian border crossings will persist for as long as national solidarity actions related to the current situation in Ottawa continue.

The convoy specific to Ottawa continues to receive a visible degree of international support, including from prominent American politicians⁹⁴ and media personalities,⁹⁵ which is promoting an image of a globally unified movement centred on opposing public health mandates.

GoFundMe’s decision to halt fundraising for the convoy has led to the rising popularity of other international fundraising methods which may not cooperate with government requests, including the crowdfunding website GiveSendGo⁹⁶ and the cryptocurrency platform Tallycoin,⁹⁷ which have quickly raised millions of dollars.

Propaganda associated with events in Ottawa continues to energize solidarity actions internationally, including media reports of demonstrations in New Zealand⁹⁸, Australia⁹⁹, and Alaska¹⁰⁰, and may inspire similar convoys in the United States¹⁰¹ and across Europe.¹⁰²

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The IMCIT is liaising with law enforcement partners to maintain visibility on events related to the opposition of trucker vaccine mandates which are occurring nationally, and will provide updates as required.

Issued by: Ideologically Motivated Criminal Intelligence Team (IMCIT)

Approved by: Director, Directorate of Strategic Intelligence, Federal Policing National Intelligence

¹ IMCIT NTL #2021-05 -- 2021-10-27

² Ibid.

³ IMCIT NTL #2021-04 -- 2021-09-29

⁴ IMCIT NTL #2021-07 -- 2021-12-23

⁵ IMCIT NTL #2021-06 -- 2021-11-24

⁶ IMCIT STA 2022-01 – 2022-01-18

⁷ <https://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/hundreds-of-protesters-still-in-ottawa-after-injunction-granted-to-silence-honking-1.5772443>

⁸ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/injunction-ottawa-granted-1.6342468>

⁹ <https://www.ottawapolice.ca/Modules/News/index.aspx?lang=en&newsId=1bc1b5ab-51e3-4860-8937-b181d4475989>

¹⁰ https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=121249983799777&id=100286905896085

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/convoy-protesters-police-tactical-knowledge-1.6345854>

¹³ <https://www.instagram.com/p/CZqilc5PKre/>

¹⁴ <https://givesendgo.com/FreedomConvoy2022>

¹⁵ <https://givesendgo.com/Warroomcanadanet>

¹⁶ <https://tallyco.in/s/lzxccm/>

¹⁷ https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=121249983799777&id=100286905896085

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<https://globalnews.ca/news/8587838/trucker-convoy-protest-arrests/>

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²⁰ <https://ottawa.ctvnews.ca/ottawa-police-give-update-on-downtown-trucker-protest-1.5772103>

²¹ <https://t.me/SOSOntarioPatriots/42136>

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²³ <https://globalnews.ca/news/8603944/ottawa-kids-trucks-freedom-convoy/>

²⁴ https://www.reddit.com/r/ottawa/comments/snxqit/citizens_of_ottawa_proottawa_rally_2022_a_moment/

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²⁶ Surrey : <https://www.theprogress.com/news/protesters-at-u-s-border-truck-crossing-in-south-surrey-inspired-by-ottawa-convoy/>; Regina: <https://www.sasktoday.ca/provincial-news/regina-freedom-convoy-arrives-at-sask-legislature-for-extended-barricade-5032853> ; Winnipeg : <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/women-health-clinic-clients-staff-harassed-protesters-1.6344406>

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²⁹ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatchewan/covid-19-update-feb-8-2022-1.6343563>

³⁰ <https://montreal.ctvnews.ca/this-is-a-big-change-quebec-to-lift-covid-19-restrictions-for-restaurants-home-gatherings-bars-1.5772435>

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³³ <https://vancouver.sun.com/news/local-news/vancouver-protest-the-city-and-its-roads-are-under-seige-by-duelling-protests>

³⁴ <https://www.timescolonist.com/local-news/truckers-and-counter-protesters-both-show-up-at-legislature-protest-5032968>

³⁵ <https://www.castanet.net/news/Kelowna/359297/No-police-incidents-in-Okanagan-protest-convoy-Kelowna-RCMP>

³⁶ <https://www.abbynews.com/news/protesters-at-u-s-border-truck-crossing-in-south-surrey-inspired-by-ottawa-convoy/>

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³⁷ <https://bc.ctvnews.ca/5-arrested-during-saturday-s-protests-counter-protests-in-vancouver-police-say-1.5770218>
³⁸ <https://www.timescolonist.com/local-news/truckers-and-counter-protesters-both-show-up-at-legislature-protest-5032968>
³⁹ <https://bc.ctvnews.ca/b-c-company-fires-trucker-after-cyclist-jostled-during-saturday-s-convoy-1.5773387>
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